



# WILLIAMSBURG LAND CONSERVANCY

*Preserving Our Land, Water, & Way of Life*

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April 26, 2005

To: York County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee  
c/o Mr. Nick Barba, Chairman

From: Tim Cleary  
Chairman, Williamsburg Land Conservancy Government Relations  
Committee

Re: Charting the Course to 2025: The County of York Comprehensive Plan  
Review

Dear Mr. Barba:

The Williamsburg Land Conservancy is dedicated to protecting and preserving significant natural, scenic, agricultural and historic lands in the Historic Triangle area. Intelligent land planning efforts are a key means of achieving these objectives, in the best interest of area citizens and area visitors: Indeed, if we develop in the wrong areas, the character of our communities can be irreversibly changed. The Conservancy recognizes York County's efforts to guide future development through a comprehensive plan as good stewardship of area resources. We appreciate this opportunity to provide input on several of the land use issues currently being considered.

Based on a review of the county's current Comprehensive Plan, Steering Committee meetings, and information from community conversations including citizen input and survey results, we would like to offer our comments with regard to four geographic areas in upper York County:

### I-64/Route 199 Interchange (near Water Country)

We appreciate that developing the 900 acre "Whittaker's Mill" property may offer significant economic benefits for citizens of York County. We suggest that York County's new Comprehensive Plan contain a vision for Whittaker's Mill that incorporates appropriate preservation of the historical and environmentally-sensitive areas and open space.

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*Founded in 1990 as the Historic Rivers Land Conservancy • [www.williamsburglandconservancy.org](http://www.williamsburglandconservancy.org)*

#### Burkes Corner (Neuman Road/Fenton Mill Road Intersection)

The Skimino area east of I-64 in the northernmost portion of York County is one of its most rural areas. The area, which is primarily zoned low-density residential, includes some properties with steep topography and minimal access. The current Comprehensive Plan indicates a desire that the character of the area remain rural. Citizen input also indicates that maintaining the rural character of the area is an important quality of life issue for local residents. To this end, development of this area, if any, should include generous application of landscaping treatments along Newman Road and Fenton Mill Road.

#### I-64/Camp Peary Interchange to US 60 Bypass

There are four major sites, designated "Economic Development" in the current plan including properties on both sides of Route 143 after exiting I-64 at Camp Peary and continuing on Route 132 through the Queen's Lake headlands down to the Route 60 Bypass. These sites contain forested areas and environmentally-sensitive areas including steep ravines and wetlands. The location of the properties along a significant gateway to the City of Williamsburg and the Colonial Williamsburg area form a scenic corridor. Preserving the character of this corridor is important for the enjoyment of area residents and visitors alike. We understand scenic easements are already in place to protect the character of the corridor. Development, if any, should be carefully planned to preserve the environmental features and to maintain the scenic character of the area.

#### Lightfoot Road North

The Lightfoot area of upper York County has undergone considerable development in the years since the current Comprehensive Plan was adopted including the opening of several large retailers, Great Wolf Lodge, Sentara Community Hospital's Outpatient Services and construction of the new Sentara Community Hospital currently underway. Plans to develop the balance of lands west of I-64 and Route 199 designated as "Economic Opportunity" should include thoughtful planning to protect environmentally-sensitive steep slopes and ravines, to maximize open space, and to provide for appropriate streetscape treatment(s) between roadways and developed areas as appropriate to the economic development use.

#### Protecting and Preserving Land

The Williamsburg Land Conservancy understands the economic importance to York County of the I-64 interchanges. We believe that intelligent land planning can allow for economic development of these areas while preserving historically significant sites, scenic vistas and environmentally-sensitive areas. We encourage flexibility in the planning for land use-- cluster-type development for example--in an effort to achieve multiple objectives.

We recommend that the land conservation and preservation goals in York County's current comprehensive plan (goals 4, 5, and 6 of the Land Use section) be carried over into the new plan. Further, the Conservancy encourages York County to consider a Purchase of Development Rights Program (PDR), as an additional conservation tool. Currently, five counties in the Commonwealth, including neighboring James City County, implement a PDR program. These programs encourage preservation by providing landowners with economic incentives (e.g., cash and tax incentives) in exchange for development rights while allowing landowners to continue to own and farm agricultural and forested land.

Again, on behalf of the Williamsburg Land Conservancy, thank you for your stewardship as is evident in the planning process and for allowing us the opportunity to provide input.

cc:

York Co. Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Members

York Co. Staff:

Mark Carter  
Tim Cross  
Amy Parker  
Earl Anderson  
Steve Kopczynski  
Mike Player  
James Richardson